(c) if the answer to part (a) and (b) above be in affirmative, what are the reasons for refusal to grant permission to the Amnesty members to visit the country this time?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI SANTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) to (c) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Continuation of Monopoly Cotton Procurement scheme in Maharashtra

@998. SHRI SURESH KALMADI: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government of Maharashtra had approached the Union Government to continue the Monopoly Cotton Procurement Scheme in the State; and

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (KUMARI SAROJ KHAPARDE):

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Union Government have agreed for extension of the Maharashtra Cotton Monopoly Procurement Scheme with effect from 1-7-89.

Identification of Flood Prone Areas in Assam

@@999. SHRIMATI VIJOYA CHAKRAVARTY: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had identified flood-prone areas in Assam specially the areas where floods usually cause devastation on massive scale; and

(b) if so, the number of such areas; identified so far and the measures proposed to be taken when situation demands in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF WATER RESOURCES AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS (SHRI M. M. JACOB): (a) and (b) Rashtriya Barh Ayog assessed the areas prone to floods in Assam as 3.15 Million hectares. Among others Brahmaputra sub-basin, Buridihing sub-basin in Dibrugarh district, Disang and Dikhow sub-basins in Sibsagar district, Majuli area in Jorhat district, Kopili sub-basin in Nowgong district, Manas and Baki sub-basins in Barpeta district, Pagladiya and Puthimari sub-basins in Nalbari district, Gangadhar sub-basin and South Salmara area in Dhubri district experience floods causing considerable damage. Apart from structural measures like marginal embankments and drainage channels, non-structural measures adopted for such areas are Flood Forecasting and regulation of economic activities in the floods prone areas and evacuation of persons to safer places during the periods of excessive floods.

Pollution in Raniganj and Jharia Coalfields

1000. SHRI MOSTAFA BIN QUASEM:

DR. R. K. PODDAR:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of pollution in Raniganj and Jharia Coalfields;

(b) if so, what are the details thereof; and

(c) what steps Government have taken to improve the environmental quality in this area?

@Previously Unstarred Question 465, transferred from the 21st July, 1989.

@Previously Unstarred Question 492, transferred from the 21st July, 1989.

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The problem of pollution in Raniganj and Jharia Coalfields concerns the reclamation of abandoned coalmines and the subsidence of land because of forpoper mining method. The level of suspended particulates in ambient air were excessive because no pollution control techniques during mining were adopted. The dust problem is aggravated by the movement of heavy traffic and the absence of green belt in and around the collieries.

(c) The collieries have started taking the following steps for pollution control:—

1. Provision of dust suppression arrangements at coal handling plants, coal washeries and coal loading points.

2. Spraying of water on mine haul roads for suppressing dust raised during transportation of coal and over-burden and reducing and preventing spillage of coal and over-burden roads.

3. Minimising dust by providing buffer zones and green belts in and around the colliery areas and raising of plantation on over-burden dumps.

4. Switching over to the mechanised soft coke making in place of open "Bhatta" system.

Impact of Opencast Mining on Environment

1001. SHRI RAMNARAYAN GOSWAMI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that open cast mining causes serious damages to the land surface as well as environment in the surrounding areas; and

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken for prevention of environmental damage and restoration of the damaged areas?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI Z. R ANSARI): (a) Yes, Sir. The Government is aware of the damage caused to the land surface and the environment in the surrounding areas due to opencast mining activities.

(b) The Government has adopted a two pronged approach outlined below for checking environmental damage in future and for restoration of damaged areas:

(i) The new mining projects are critically examined to ensure incorporation of adequate environmental safeguards, such as concurrent reclamation of the mined areas, at the planning stage itself.

(ii) For restoration of damaged areas the Government has set up an Expert Committee which would study the status of these areas and suggest a suitable approach for restoration.

West Bengal Chief Minister's request for giving Presidential Assent to West Bengal Land Reforms (3rd Amendment) Bill, 1986

1002. SHRI MOHAMMED AMIN: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Chief Minister of West Bengal has drawn the attention of the Prime Minister in the matter of Presidential assent to the West Bengal Land Reforms (3rd Amendment) Bill, 1986; and

(b) what is the present position in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI BUTA SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.